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Board honors workforce development efforts

ROANOKE, VA -- The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board has recognized professionals and businesses that have made outstanding contributions to the local workforce system in the last year. Honorees were announced at the Board's inaugural recognition event Thursday, September 30. Carilion chief executive officer Dr. Edward Murphy presented the keynote address.

Honorees were:

- Sherrie Hammerstrom was honored as Program Participant of the Year; after experiencing a layoff she enrolled in the WIA Dislocated Worker Program to train in computer technology at Virginia Western Community College. She now works for the Franklin County Information Technology department
- Catherine "Kitty" Lambeth with the Virginia Employment Commission and Debbie Melvin with the Virginia Department of Business Assistant were recognized as Workforce Professionals of the Year. Lambeth serves unemployed individuals in The Franklin Center often meeting with more than 80 customers in a single day to handle claims and resolve payment issues. Melvin has been active in a number of business recruitment efforts in Western Virginia and has helped negotiate worker training funding and opportunities for new business.
- Franklin County Administrator Rick Huff was named partner of the year for his long-time dedication to workforce development. He was instrumental in the development of a workforce consortium for the county in the 1990s and spearheaded the effort to establish the Franklin Center for Advanced Learning in Education which opened in 2007.
- Jennifer Unroe, who recently retired from the 4H Extension Agent for the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service in Alleghany County, was honored as the Workforce Community Advocate. Her work with the Workforce Board Youth Council and the Alleghany Highlands Career Council helped established a program of regular career outreach to middle and high school students.
- McAirLaid Inc. which located in Rocky Mount three years ago, was awarded the Business of the Year award for its use of local workforce services to select, train and retain local residents as new employees. They also have assisted The Franklin Center in obtaining additional grants to provide expanded services.
- Jo Anne Lempeck, an adult education instructor with Franklin County Schools, was recognized as Workforce Educator of the Year for her work with individuals seeking a GED. She tailors classes to meet the needs of a diverse clientele and ensures their success.

WVWDB, is a non-profit organization, serving as a liaison between the public, the business community and partner organizations and administers employment- and training-related programs in the Alleghany Highlands, Roanoke Valley and Franklin County. The board charters and provides WIA workforce services oversight for local Virginia Workforce Network centers including the Roanoke Valley Workforce Center, The Franklin Center in Rocky Mount, the Covington VEC and the Goodwill Jobs Campus.